

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Examining the Implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act”
February 5, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today we examine recent efforts by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). We appreciate FDA’s Deputy Commissioner for Foods, Mike Taylor, returning to the committee to speak on this important subject and the many complex aspects of the agency’s ongoing rulemaking process. Ensuring the safety of our nation’s food supply will always be a top priority of this committee.

While I applaud Mr. Taylor for his outreach to a wide array of individuals, communities, and companies who will be effected by these regulations, a great deal of work remains to be done to get this new framework right from the outset. FDA should continue this dialogue with stakeholders and thoughtfully consider each of their concerns before finalizing the proposals the agency has issued over the past year.

Food safety cannot be a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all approach. FDA must fully account for the diversity of our nation’s local farmers, food manufacturers, and distributors. For example, I repeatedly heard concerns from farmers in Southwest Michigan that FDA’s initial produce safety proposal did not take into account the unique water supply issues they face in our region. I am glad FDA is not rushing to finalize this rule and will be proposing new language for comment prior to moving forward. Local farmers must have a seat at the table.

Further, many of the food manufacturers I have met with from Michigan and elsewhere have already implemented innovative, risk-based safety programs that prioritize safety while increasing efficiencies and keeping costs down. FDA’s preventative controls regulations must be written to promote these best practices and not force companies to take a step backwards in order to conform to a check-the-box mentality at FDA. In order for that to happen, it is critical that the agency’s inspectors are trained accordingly.

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